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## Weed and Seed sees success

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Sick of bar-goers who would leave drunk and then drive through her neighborhood, Cheryl Norris of Lafayette successfully turned her anger into organizing a crime watch last summer that continues to thrive.

Block captains patrol the streets and watch for suspicious activity in the Linnwood neighborhood. Their orange vests differentiate them from drug dealers, vandals and loiterers.

"We used to have problems with drugs, parking lot brawls ... tagging and personal property thefts. We've seen a change, definitely," Norris said. "And we're not giving up, either. If we see it, we will report it."

Norris and her neighbors are doing their part to assist Lafayette in the downtown Weed and Seed initiative, a federal program started in September to reduce crime and revitalize the community. In turn, Weed and Seed grant money paid for Linnwood Neighborhood Crime Watch window stickers and block captains' safety vests.

Officials are encouraging residents to attend a meeting Thursday to update the community on what has been accomplished with Weed and Seed so far, as well as efforts to come.

Among those announcements will be a grant of more than \$600,000 that could put the city's homeless residents into stable housing by summer.

Lafayette is one of three Indiana cities to receive the funds, along with Muncie and Kokomo.

"This is not only addressing the homeless situation in the community, but in some capacity is helping the city deal with new residents," said Adam Murphy, Lafayette's Weed and Seed coordinator. "It's central to the city's stability. ... There's a lot of movement here, and we are trying to stabilize that."

The program, called Shelter Plus Care, is being funded by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant that will be administered by the state, according to Rodney Stockment, community services department manager for the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.

Details are still being worked out. The grant came about from Lafayette's participation in Weed and Seed.

In September, Lafayette received a five-year, \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to begin the Weed and Seed program, with a goal of "weeding" out crime and planting "seeds" of change.

Lafayette resident Maribeth Slebodnik heads the St. Lawrence/McAllister neighborhood crime watch. She said the group's efforts have fit well with the Weed and Seed initiative.

"We have an increased feeling of safety and better contact with law enforcement," Slebodnik said. "We're interested in keeping things safe."